

Message Text

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12

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 AF-04 EUR-12 ISO-00 IO-10 SAM-01 SAJ-01

CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01 INR-05 L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05

PA-01 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 /081 W

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P R 201740Z DEC 74

FM AMEMBASSY RABAT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4108

INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY DAKAR

AMEMBASSY MADRID

AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

AMEMBASSY TUNIS

USUN NEW YORK 702

C O N F I D E N T I A L RABAT 6168

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR MO SS SP PBOR

SUBJECT: ARMED CLASH IN SPANISH SAHARA

1. BBC AND NEWS AGENCIES HAVE REPORTED THAT THERE WAS CLASH BETWEEN SPANISH POLICE AND FOREIGN LEGIONNAIRES AND SAHARAN GUERRILLAS. ACCORDING THESE REPORTS ONE LEGIONNAIRE SERGEANT AND FOUR SOLDIERS WERE KILLED AND TWO WOUNDED ON SPANISH SIDE. SAHARANS LOST SIX DEAD AND THREE WOUNDED. INCIDENT TOOK PLACE NEAR TIFARITI ON MAURITANIAN-SAHARAN FRONTIER ACCORDING NEWS ACCOUNTS.

2. SPANISH EMBASSY HAS PROVIDED US MORE DETAILS ON CLASH. AT OUTSET, GROUP OF POLICE IN JEEPS AMBUSHED BY ELEMENTS OF SAHARA LIBERATION FRONT. FOUR POLICEMEN WERE KILLED AND SAHARANS SUSTAINED LOSSES AS WELL. BATTLE LASTED MOST OF NIGHT AND ENDED AFTER ARRIVAL OF REINFORCEMENTS
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FROM SPANISH FOREIGN LEGION. ACCORDING EMBASSY, SPANISH

LOSSES WERE FIVE DEAD (FOUR POLICE AND ONE LEGIONNAIRE SERGEANT) AND TEN WOUNDED. SAHARAN LOSSES WERE AS REPORTED BY NEWS AGENCIES. THE THREE WOUNDED SAHARANS, WHO EMBASSY SAYS ARE IN GRAVE CONDITION, WERE CAPTURED.

3. SPANISH EMBASSY BELIEVES THERE ARE SOME 14 GROUPS OF SAHARA LIBERATION FRONT FIGHTERS. EACH GROUP COMPRISED OF ROUGHLY 30 MEN. ORIGINALLY, EMBASSY SAYS, ALL THESE GROUPS FAVORED ASSOCIATION OF SAHARA WITH MAURITANIA. NOW, HOWEVER, ALL EXCEPT ONE WISH TO SEE REGION INDEPENDENT. GROUPS CROSS 1,000 KILOMETER MAURITANIAN-SAHARAN FRONTIER FREELY. THEY ENTER MOROCCO MUCH LESS FREQUENTLY BECAUSE MOROCCAN ARMY PATROLS FRONTIER CLOSELY. SAHARA LIBERATION FRONT CONTINUES RECEIVE SUBSTANTIAL SUPPORT FROM LIBYA AND ALGERIA.

4. SPANISH EMBASSY CONTINUES TO TAKE LINE THAT MOST ARAB STATES FAVOR INDEPENDENT SAHARA. ALGERIA OBVIOUSLY FAVORS THIS SOLUTION, IN EMBASSY'S VIEW AND ARAB LEAGUE UNWILLING OPPOSE THIS POSITION.

5. COMMENT: CLASH DESCRIBED ABOVE APPARENTLY MOST SERIOUS INCIDENT OF ITS KIND TO HAVE TAKEN PLACE IN THE SAHARA DURING THE PAST TWO YEARS. IT BEARS OUT CONTENTION THAT SAHARA LIBERATION FRONT, WHICH PROBABLY RESPONSIBLE FOR SABOTAGE OF PHOSPHATE CONVEYOR BELT, IS BECOMING A FORCE TO BE RECKONED WITH. THUS, AS MUCH AS MOROCCANS MAY WISH SEE SITUATION CALMED DOWN UNTIL ICJ'S ADVISORY OPINION RENDERED, IT MAY BE THAT COMING MONTHS WILL SEE CONTINUING VIOLENCE WITHIN SAHARA.
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